

By Sidharth Mishra



Delhi University Students Union (DUSU) election results declared last week created some stir on the campus but not the way as it got projected in the media. Party spokespersons and analysts went to the extent of declaring it as a referendum on the performance of the Narendra Modi government and a signal for the return of the Congress to power. Delhi Congress president Ajay Maken expectedly gave credit to his leader Rahul Gandhi but overdid the act saying that Congress vice-president's speech at University of Columbia, Berkley changed situation overnight. A veteran Delhi Congress worker justified the "courtier's quote" saying what else could made Congress jump from nowhere (it figured below the NOTA votes in the JNUSU polls a few days earlier) to clinching top two positions in DUSU. First JNU and DUSU are very different, while former largely has the post-graduates and research scholars participating in the polls, DUSU is more about under-graduates participating in a more brusque process.

In the last decade, there has also been a sea change in the polling pattern in Delhi University. It's a change brought about by a complex situation. These polls for the past few years have been witnessing what can be termed as a caste-based election. This has been the butterfly effect of the quota introduced for candidates for the admission of candidates from the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Delhi University by Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh during the UPA-I regime. Though Arjun Singh's formula made room for retaining the existing number of seats for the general category students, it did so by providing for extra seats to accommodate the increased number of OBC students. Little did he realise that he was going to create fault lines inside every classroom of Delhi University.

Today while the students with 90% marks from the general category find it absolutely difficult to get a toehold in a respectable course of a reasonable college of the university, those with barely pass percentages walk into the same classrooms without much sweat. What has worsened the situation is the Delhi University administration's open flouting of rules regarding the implementation of the creamy layer category for the OBC students.

This has facilitated entry for the economic elite from urban villages belonging to the Gujjar and Jat communities. They use their admissions tickets first to contest Delhi University polls and then flaunt their success in students' politics for political positions at a higher level.

Questions may be asked what's wrong with that. People may point out that students in the

DUSU Polls: No To Modi; But No Thumps Up For Rahul Either

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 20 September 2017 08:35

past too have graduated from Delhi University politics to state and national politics. That's true, but the complexions of the elections have completely changed since direct polls were first introduced in the mid-1970s. The 'student' participation in these polls has come down, and those who are part of the process are generally such (non) scholars who are there on the campus only for the reason of fighting elections.

Besides the use of money and muscle, what is of greater concern is the social divide that these polls have increasingly caused. The hoary university draws contrasting images when admissions happen in summers and when elections take place a few months later. In an ideal world, universities should be a place for bridging social divides. They should never be the instruments for widening existing chasms

Thankfully, this year the better educated students took it upon themselves to send a clear message. When poll percentage went up this time, people little realized what was in store. The large number of votes polled by None Of The Above (NOTA) category stumped all. Of the total votes polled for all four posts, NOTA alone got 29,770 votes. NOTA votes polled for each post: President – 5162, VP – 7689, Secretary -7891 and Joint Secretary – 9028. For the president and joint secretary's posts, NOTA had more votes than the Left students' body, AISA.

Those who carefully follow the trends on the Delhi University campus could easily see that a large number of students came out to vote to give a big thumb down to all the political parties. Between the Congress-affiliated NSUI and BJP-backed ABVP, DUSU polls for the past several years have now been reduced to be contest between candidates from the two communities – Jats and Gujjars.

While likes of Ajay Maken, himself a veteran of campus politics of 1980s, would know that there isn't much for his party to celebrate in DUSU victory, the concern should be greater for the image managers of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The children from the educated middle class families, coming out to vote and then pressing the NOTA button is clear indication about their disenchantment with the government policies.

While they may not be yet ready to vote for the Congress, and definitely not the Left despite their chest beatings in select campuses, the youth of the country is surely trying to sound Narendra Modi that his reforms are pinching people hard especially the urban middle class.

DUSU Polls: No To Modi; But No Thumps Up For Rahul Either

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 20 September 2017 08:35

(Sidharth Mishra is Editor, Capital Khabar. This piece first appeared in DBPOST, Bhopal)